Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance is the statewide voice for non-motorized trail users, helping people build, connect and promote trails for a healthier and more prosperous Michigan.

Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance is an affiliate of the Michigan Fitness Foundation.

New Trail Construction

Nancy Krupiarz, MTGA Executive Director

Michiganders making their way north for summertime fun continues as a time-honored tradition this year. For those headed up the middle part of the state, however, there has been a bit of a slowdown at times due to US 127 repair and what? A trail???

Yes, a new, exciting nonmotorized connection is happening between the Alma/St. Louis area and Ithaca, the first segment of the Mid-Michigan Community Pathways trail network, which is part of an ambitious 40 mile nonmotorized action plan envisioned by a collaborative of communities, tribal entities, state agencies, and nonprofits. It will link up the existing Fred Meijer Heartland Trail at Alma to the Pere Marquette Trail at Clare. Long term, the group’s vision is to connect to the Fred Meijer Clinton-Ionia-Shiawassee Trail in St. Johns. The plan has the support of nearly all of the communities from one end to the other. Partners include: the counties of Clinton, Gratiot, and Isabella, the cities of Alma, Clare, Ithaca, Mt. Pleasant and St. Louis, the townships of Arcada, Chippewa, Coe, Fulton, Pine River, and Union; higher education institutions, Alma College, Mid-Michigan Community College, and Central Michigan University; the East Michigan Council of Governments; the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, and others.

This first 6.6 mile segment links the park and ride lot along US 127 at Washington Street in Ithaca to the next park and ride lot at Lincoln Road in Alma. The $2.5 million project consists of funding from the federal Transportation Alternatives Program, administered through the Michigan Department of Transportation with local match from communities and private donors.

The regional trail network is envisioned to happen over the next 20 years and is comprised of six segments: Alma/St. Louis to Ithaca, Shepherd to Alma/St. Louis, Mt. Pleasant to Shepherd, Mt. Pleasant to the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe’s tribal grounds, Mt. Pleasant and finally, Rosebush to Clare. There is an action plan for each segment and the trails coalition has created a maintenance fund to frontload the expenses that will come in the future for the trail’s upkeep.

The next 6.8 mile segment, Mt. Pleasant to Shepherd, was also supposed to happen this year, but still needs $150,000 in local match dollars by mid-October at the very latest to keep the grant funding intact and on schedule for 2017 construction.

So far, this project has garnered over $1.7 million from the federal TAP program,
Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, Saginaw Watershed Initiative Network, Mt. Pleasant Area Community Foundation, the Village of Shepherd and Union Charter Township. This does not include the $307,800 “soft” costs for the project for survey, design, and engineering that were obtained from the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe and the Mt. Pleasant Area Community Foundation. As you can see, the support for this project has been comprehensive, but more is needed to actually make it happen. If you would like more details (download the Power Point presentation) or would like to help with fundraising, visit www.midmichpathways.org and be sure to like their Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/Mid-Michigan-Community-Pathways to follow their progress.

2016 Board Member Elections

**Diane Bancroft - Canton, MI**
- President of Friends of I-275 Metro Trail - 8 years
- Program Management Process and Timing Analyst retired from Chrysler Corp.

“I recognize the health, social and economic benefits that trails continue to bring to Michigan communities. I also recognize that every trail in Michigan is the result of planning, organization, outreach and fundraising. The devil is often in the trail details and it’s those details that I help recognize and address. My background in corporate project management helps in organizing successful MTGA events and initiatives, helps bring people together, and helps get things done.”

**Patrick Baughan - Holt, MI**
- Retired owner of Hot Prospects Direct, Inc., a direct marketing firm in Lansing
- Helped start the Michigander Bicycle Tour, working, volunteering and riding all 25 years.

“My goal is to help steer the organization to be the go-to group for trail users and developers to use for information. My involvement in the Michigander Bicycle Tour as a volunteer over the last 25 years has helped keep the dollars flowing for this great cause. I plan to continue.”

**Neal Billetdeaux - Ann Arbor, MI**
- Principal/Senior Landscape Architect - Smith Group JJR
- Landscape Architect - 26 years
- B.S. Botany/Ecology - University of Michigan
- M.L.A., University of Michigan

“I intend to advance the planning and implementation of greenways and trails in the Great Lakes region by acting as a resource and proponent. I will use my skills to assist local communities with advancing their trail concepts and facilitate networking with potential funding sources. I also plan to use this experience to stay current with trends in greenway planning and design.”

**Jim Dickie - Chesaning, MI**
- Retired from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Representative of the Michigan Snowmobile Association

“I would like to continue serving on the board to help with “Connecting Michigan” with trails, and to encourage that trails be available for many different uses.”

**Rob Pulver - Rockford, MI**
- Publisher of Michigan Trails Magazine
- Steel worker and helicopter logger
- Founded Rockford Advertising in 1993

Grand Valley State University graduate in Film/Video and Advertising/Public Relations

“Michigan Trails Magazine is the most interesting and enjoyable project I’ve worked on in my career as a communications professional. It brings together my love of cycling and the trails, and affords me the opportunity to actively promote the trails movement while marketing the use of Michigan trails as a destination tourist attraction. I look forward to continuing to work with MTGA to help support the development of nonmotorized multi-use trails throughout the state of Michigan.”

(Continued on page 3)
Julie Clark - Traverse City, MI
- Former Trails Coordinator for Mecklenberg County, North Carolina
- Has lead the Traverse Area Recreation & Transportation (TART) organization since 2010
- Active in trail development efforts and policies at the local, regional and state level
- Currently serves on the Michigan State Parks Advisory Council

“I hope to help MTGA continue to educate and advocate for the benefits of non-motorized trail networks and ensure trails are considered part of a comprehensive approach to providing economic, social and physical health benefits at a local, regional and state-wide level. I would also like to help MTGA support efforts to identify successful funding and management strategies for the development and maintenance of trail networks throughout the state.”

Ron Bock – Lansing, MI
- Attorney with Glassen, Rhead, McLean, Campbell & Schumacher, P.L.C. in Lansing.
- Active in the Mid-Michigan chapter of the Michigan Mountain Bike Association and serves as the Trail Coordinator for Anderson Park Mountain Bike Trail in Delta Township.
- Volunteered for the Capital City River Run for ten years and with the Michigan office of Rails to Trails before it became the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance.

“My interest in trails is grounded in the environment we create for ourselves. Having been raised in the Detroit area, I got a close-up view of the historic, economic, and legal factors that lead to congestion and sprawl. I want to make sure that trails carve out that green space allowing communities to preserve and improve quality of life for their residents.”

Meghan Woods, Intern

This year the Michigander Bicycle Tour took on West Michigan and Michigan’s Gold Coast. It combined beautiful trails, Great Lakes beaches, lighthouses, rivers, virgin white pines, and a healthy serving of coffee shops and brewpubs. We had 769 cyclists that selected one of three tour options, the 2-Day Tour, 6-Day Tour or 8-day Tour.

Fruitport Middle School was the perfect home base for the 2-Day Michigander. On the first day, we rode the trail network to Kirk Park in Grand Haven, which stretches along Lake Michigan and is filled with sandy beach, high bluffs, and wooded dunes, and looped back to Fruitport. The second day we rode out to Kruse Park in North Muskegon complete with a great overlook to the sandy beach and dunes along Lake Michigan, and then back again to Fruitport. In addition to enjoying a scenic casual weekend of riding through the charming towns of Fruitport, Grand Haven and Muskegon, some of our 2-day riders visited Michigan’s Adventure, the USS Silversides Submarine Museum and learned how to country line dance with the West Michigan Bootscooters. The only hitch on the weekend ride was the incredible winds that blew in, tossing some tents around, but nothing that couldn’t be remedied quickly.

Sunday we said goodbye to the 2-Day riders cyclists with a windy finish line complete with cake and lemonade. Later that evening, the 8-Day riders were joined by riders for the 6-day tour. This leg of the tour began in early on Monday from Fruitport and headed north to Hart.

We had a last minute detour in North Muskegon on our route from Fruitport to Hart on the way to the Fred Meijer Berry Junction Trail. Then we headed up the newly paved Hart Montague Trail, the first paved rail trail in Michigan. There was celebratory ribbon cutting in New Era with DNR and the local communities at Country Dairy, which was also the perfect SAG stop for our riders. After setting up camp at Hart’s John Gurney Park, riders headed to downtown to check out the historic museum, cute shops, and pubs. After dinner, even more headed to Hart Commons for a festive trail dedication, recognition of the family of William Field (founder of the trail) and robust Michigander Bicycle Tour welcome. Back at camp, an evening of acoustic music took place in the pavilion overlooking Lake Hart as the sun set.
Tuesday morning we packed up and left Hart to ride 51 miles on rolling backroads into Newaygo. Riders finished their ride by gliding into a beautiful view of the Muskegon River at the Ed Henning County Park, our camp for the night. That evening, over 100 riders went on a full moon/kayak adventure on the Muskegon River. About halfway down the river on a small island, riders enjoyed relaxing in the beautiful scenery and live music with our ride musician Drew Howard along with several of our musician riders sitting in on ukuleles and guitars. Everyone cooked up s’mores over a campfire as the sun set, then continued down the winding river under a full moon back to camp.

On Wednesday morning we rolled into Hit the Road Joe, our first SAG stop, for a strong cup of fresh coffee and treats taking backroads to the White Pine Trailhead in Spring Lake. The folks at Cedar Springs Brewing set up a great SAG stop and lunch for the riders and downtown Rockford rolled out the red carpet on the way down to Comstock Park. Fifth Third Ballpark, home to the West Michigan Whitecaps, was the location for the 25th Annual Michigander Ride Party and All American BBQ dinner. During dinner, riders and volunteers who have been with the Michigander Bicycle Tour since its inception were honored and the Detroit Bike raffle winner was drawn.

The next day a strong storm of rain and hail hit on the way to Holland. Riders took shelter at SAG stops or found shelter in friendly local’s garages, shops, gas stations and even a historic church. The storm may have slowed down and drenched our cyclists but their resilience showed as they continued on to our camp at Holland High School. Many cyclists ended the day with a few good survival stories and a sense of accomplishment. Once riders made it to camp and the weather had cleared they headed to downtown Holland, a hip, historic town with diverse, first-class shopping and dining, creative arts venues, street musicians, magicians and dancers performing everywhere, making it a festive and memorable time. Back at the high school the Michigander Silent Auction was held and Nancy Krupiarz, MTGA Executive Director, gave us a brief look-back at the past 25 years and the big trails movement milestones, in appreciation for all that the Michigander participants have helped to accomplish in this state. Later that evening, Elephant Bingo got underway and shuttles from the Holland Visitors Bureau brought riders back downtown to head into Our Brewing Company, who hosted a ride party and even brought in a DJ Shark to spin classic vinyl for the riders.

On Friday, nearing the end of the tour, three route options to Fennville were offered (22, 50 or 100 miles) taking cyclists through Saugatuck, Douglas, South Haven, Grand Junction, Pullman, Bravo, Bloomindale and Allegan depending on which route was selected for the day. One of the route options included the tour’s first ever century ride with 14 riders completing the 100 mile excursion to finish line at the Fenn Valley Vineyards, complete with a Champagne toast. The night continued on at the vineyard for the Blue Star Trail Soiree - making the Michigander Bicycle Tour’s last night extra special. It was an evening of wine, tasty tidbits of culinary delights, music filling the air by award winning multi-instrumentalist/singer songwriters Drew Howard, Mark Schrock and Andrew Schrock. Our SAG Sweep/vocalist Barbara Payton and Ride Director/guitarist Mary McGuire sat in with the band and together they rocked the vineyard. Proceeds will benefit The Friends of the Blue Star Trail; a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the development and promotion of a proposed 20-mile recreation pathway from Holland to South Haven.

On Saturday morning, everyone began their ride back to where the tour began, passing through New Richmond, Holland, Grand Haven, Spring Lake and Ferrysburg before crossing the Finish Line at Fruitport Middle School. After a scenic day of riding, riders were cheered on as they crossed the finish line with music while being waved in by our enthusiastic race marshall Sam Kennedy. Cake, lemonade and memories were shared as everyone said goodbye.
Miles of New Trails Roll Out in 2016

Nancy Krupiarz, MTGA Executive Director

Many trail improvements are underway in Michigan this season and will continue until the snow flies. The one that is perhaps most visible is revealed as you travel north along the center spine of our state on US-127. It is the Mid-Michigan Community Pathway from Ithaca to Alma and spans 6.6 miles. This is the first segment of an eventual 40 mile trail that will travel from the Fred Meijer Heartland Trail to the Pere Marquette Trail (see the New Trail Construction article on page 1 for more details).

Trail additions and improvements abound around the state, here an overview from north to south:

Upper Peninsula
- Iron Ore Heritage Trail (Marquette County) - An additional 2 miles of the undeveloped rail trail was paved

Northern Lower Peninsula
- North Eastern State Trail (Emmett, Mackinac Counties) - Crushed limestone trail development and bridge restoration on the rail trail from Alanson to Mackinac City.
- North Central State Trail (Otsego County) - Trailhead development with new bathrooms at Wolverine Park.
- North Western State Trail (Presque Ile and Alpena counties) - Trailhead developments at Metz Historic Park and within the City of Alpena.
- Boyne City to Charlevoix Trail (Charlevoix County) - First phase of the trail constructed, 3.2 miles from the Boyne City limits to Young State Park (Springwater Beach Road).
- Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail (Leelanau County) - Another phase constructed from Port Oneida Road to Bohemian Road, extending the total trail mileage to 20 miles.
- Buffalo Ridge Trail (Grand Traverse County) - Phase II of the trail was constructed, connecting 1 mile from Westside Middle School to the YMCA, bringing total trail mileage to 2.25 miles.

Mid- Michigan (East)
- Great Lakes Bay Regional Trail (Bay County) - Development of a 5 mile rail trail (and trailhead) from Hotchkiss Road to Melbourne Road.

Mid-Michigan (West)
- William Field Memorial Hart-Montague Trail (Oceana and Muskegon counties) - Widening and resurfacing 22 miles on the first paved rail trail in Michigan.
- North Bank Trail (Ottawa County) - a short but critical section of the path extending the 3.3 mile pavement done in recent years to under I-96 at Murphy Street.
- Spoonville Trail (Ottawa County) - Development of the first 1.8 miles of this new 3.8 mile trail which creates an important connection under the new M-231 bridge. It will eventually link the North Bank Trail to the Grand River Greenway.
- Grand River Edges Trail (Kent County) - Extends the trail on the east side of the Grand River to Leonard Street on its way to connect with Riverside Park.
- Grand River Greenway (Ottawa County) - A new trail starting this fall with connecting Connor Bayou to Riverside Park in Crockery Township.
- Paul Henry Thornapple Trail (Barry County) - Extends the trail a mile from Middleville downtown north to Crane Road.

Mid-Michigan (Central)
- The RAM Trail (Ingham County) - The first phase of this trail eventually connecting Sycamore Creek Trail to the middle school and adjoining neighborhoods. This phase runs from Eifert Road east to the village of Holt

Southeast Michigan
- Border-to-Border Trail (Washtenaw County) - Completion of a 1/8 mile connection into the Village of Dexter at Mast Road.
New Trail Construction

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- Mid-Michigan (Central) – Paul Henry Thornapple Trail (Barry County) – Extends the trail a mile from Middleville downtown north to Crane Road.
- Grand River Greenway (Ottawa County) – A new trail starting this fall with connecting Connor Bayou to Riverside Park in school and adjoining neighborhoods. This phase runs from Eifert Road east to the village of Holt.
- William Field Memorial Hart-Montague Trail (Oceana and Muskegon counties) – Widening and resurfacing 22 miles on the rail trail from Alanson to Mackinac City.
- North Eastern State Trail (Emmett, Mackinac Counties) – Crushed limestone trail development and bridge restoration on area and Ithaca, the first segment of the Mid-Michigan Community Pathways trail network, which is part of an ambitious 40-mile nonmotorized action plan envisioned for a healthier and more prosperous Michigan.

Upcoming Events

- Trail Towns Tour (September 25, 2016)
- Trails for Everyone: MTGA Annual Meeting (October 9, 2016)